

fidently affirm, 'twould not have been otherwise with Roman Catholicks, since they look upon the converting of Hereticks, to be no small meritorious work.

Quest. 3. *The Odious and often Reflections I have heard cast on the Common-Prayer, that it hinders Praying by the Spirit, and causes those that attend on it to degenerate into meer Formality, taking away all sincere Devotion, and leaving only an empty Name of Religion, has not made me a little uneasie, and tho' I think I have a great deal of reason still to continue the frequenting of it, yet I am much dissatisfied at these Reproaches, and desire you, Gentlemen, having profess'd your selves of our Church, to give me your Reasons for the use of it?*

Ans^r. Whatsoever is established by the general Consent of the Church, if not expressly contrary to our Duty, ought for the sake of Peace to be comply'd with, whereas on the contrary to make Schisms for indifferent things, is not only prejudicial to the Church but State also, and expressly forbid by the Apostles. But here is yet more to be said for this, and upon Examination our Prayers will be found more beneficial and expedient for Publick Worship, than Extempore Prayers, (which is its self a Form to the People) for while we are considering, if we can with Faith offer up a Petition, we are more than probable to lose two or three, and so make our Prayers very confused; whereas the Prayers of the Church are composed and fitted for all Conditions, and raise the Soul to a higher Sense of our Wants, the Affluency of our Maker, and leave us more at leisure to keep our Affections.

That its being a Form hinders Praying by the Spirit, we only refer its Accusers to the Old and New Testaments, for Christ taught his Disciples a Form: The Jews had a Publick Form of Worship, and both East and Western Christians, Romish and Reformed, use Forms in Publick, and do none of these Pray by the Spirit? Surely whosoever is affected with his own Indigency, acknowledges his Makers Power and Goodness, and heartily desires what he asks, Prays by the Spirit tho' the words be a Form.

We must with grief Confess, that a great part of those that frequent our Prayers put too great a Stress on a Publick Devotion, and thinking that sufficient, they disregard their Conversation, and make too light of private Duties, and if the Lives of these only are examined, our Adversaries have some appearance of Reason for their Censure. But the many Examples of Sincere Christians, (which daily present 'em selves at Morning and Evening-Service) that make Conscience of their Actions, and are sensible 'tis their highest Happiness, they can often appear before God, whose Experience hath taught 'em they've a Father that's wonderfully tender of them, that's pleased to accept of their imperfect Petitions, and returns gracious An-

swers above expectation, who will not afflict his Children but for their Benefit, and will give Ear unto their broken Praises; such therefore that are convinced of his Goodness, and how base and ungrateful they shou'd be to offend so good a God, will not neglect any known Duty, or commit a known Sin, which it must needs be to approve by their Practice of that Worship, which destroys Sincerity, and degenerates into Formality.

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